2. As on 30th June, 2003, the stocks of sugar in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh were 54.52 lakh tonnes and 31.27 lakh tonnes respectively, as against 54.11 lakh tonnes and 37.28 lakh tonnes respectively, on the corresponding date of the previous season.

3. Sugar stocks are disposed off through domestic sales under the monthly "regulated release" mechanism and through exports to promote which the Central Government have, *inter-alia*, taken the following steps:-

(i) Quantitative restrictions on export of sugar have been lifted;

(ii) Factories exporting sugar have been allowed exemption from levy on the quantity of sugar exported;

(iii) Adjustment in free sale stocks of sugar factories exporting sugar is being made at the end of 18 months from the date of export;

(iv) Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) benefit @4% on the f.o.b. value of exports has been allowed on exports of sugar;

(v) With effect from 21st June, 2002, the sugar factories have been allowed to claim reimbursement of expenditure incurred on internal transport and freight charges on export shipments of sugar;

(vi) With effect from 14th February, 2003, the sugar factories have been allowed neutralization of ocean freight disadvantage on export shipments of sugar @Rs. 350 per tonne.

4. The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 has recently been amended *vide* Notification dated 2nd June, 2003 to provide for effective implementation of "regulated release" mechanism.

Infotech pact with China

*273. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Prime Minister while addressing a large gathering of industry and IT professionals in China, had proposed that the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing could provide a good opportunity for the Indian and Chinese Companies to work together;

(b) whether proposal made by Prime Minister during his visit has led to agreements between the two countries on IT industry;

(c) if so, whether any steps towards working with China on software have been taken; and

(d) if so, to what extent both the countries may go together in software and hardware?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for bilateral cooperation in the field of Information Technology was signed between India and China in July, 2000. There has since been no proposal for an infotech pact with China. The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) sees a business opportunity in the Beijing Olympic High Tech Action Plan, which provides for optimization of a batch of projects in the field of traffic and transport, clean energy, environment, protection of the Olympic sports ground and gymnasia, opening and closing ceremonies, science and technology for sports and development of Zhongguancon Science and Technology Park Zone. NASSCOM is exploring the feasibility of cooperation between Indian and Chinese companies for the IT requirements of the 2008 Olympic games.

It is felt that if synergies are developed between India and China in specific areas of their technological advantage both countries would derive a greater benefit than by competing across the spectrum. The Chinese side is yet to respond to the Indian suggestions.

(c) The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for bilateral cooperation in the IT sector envisaged an institutional mechanism for regular interaction in a structured manner. A Joint Working Group arrangement for implementation of the MoU has been suggested by the Indian side.

(d) The Chinese side is yet to respond to the suggestions for mutual cooperation in this domain.